

Message Text

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70

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /073 W

----- 078556

R 121033Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1141

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 8935

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, OAU, NI

SUBJECT: ARIKPO ON MIDDLE EAST

1. FORMER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER ARIKPO STOPPED BY RESIDENCE LAST EVENING (9/11/75). FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPAL POINTS IN HOUR'S CONVERSTAION REGARDING MIDDLES EAST AND NEW NIGERIAN REGIME.

2. ARIKPO SAID EGYPTIANS HAD SOUGHT NIGERIAN SUPPORT AT OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING IN DAR-ES-SALAAM. EGYPTIANS SAID THEY WERE TIRED OF CONTINUED CONFRONTATION AND COULD NOT AFFORD NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL. THEY NEEDED HELP FROM RESPONSIBLE AFRICANS AGAINST ISLAMIC SUMMIT DECISION TO PRESS FOR EXPULSION OF ISRAEL FROM UN. ARIKPO PROMISED NIGERIAN COLLABORATION AND MADE STRONG SPEECH AGAINST EXPULSION THE NEXT DAY. THIS WAS ALL THAT SIERRA LEONE, ZAIRE, KENYA AND OTHERS NEEDED. ONCE NIGERIA HAD TAKEN THE LEAD, SUPPORT
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FOR THE MODERATE VIEW SNOWBALLED. THE LIBYANS WERE FURIOUS WITH

ARIKPO, BUT ACCORIDNG TO ARIKPO HE GAVE BACK AS HARD AS HE TOOK. AT THE SUBSEQUENT SUMMIT AT KAMPALA, THE LIBYANS OPENLY GLOATED WHEN WORD OF THE NIGERIAN COUP WAS RECIEVED, TO THE DISGUST OF MANY OTHER DELEGATIONS, INCLUDING THE ZAIROIS, WHO WITH OTHERS SUCCEEDED IN HOLDING OFF ANY SWINB/BACK TOWARD EXPULSION. (ARIKPO NONETHELESS CASTIGATED ZAIRE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER BULA AS VIOLENT, IRRATIONAL AND "DANGEROUS.")

3. ARIKPO SAID NIGERIA HAD BEEN FOR SOME TIME IN THE FORE FRONT OF A SIGNIFICANT AND GROWING MEMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHO BELIEVED AFRICA WAS BEING TAKEN FOR A RIDE BY SWALLOWING THE NON-ALIGNED CONSENSUS. (I'M NOT SURE HE MIXED HIS METAPHORS THAT BADLY.) HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE THE NEW NIGERIAN REGIME WOULD SWALLOW IT EITHER BUT HE ADMITTED IT WAS TOO EARLY TO BE SURE. AS FOR THE CURRENT DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, HE CONSIDERED IT A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT AND COULD NOT ANTICIPATE ANY OTHER REACTION FROM THE NEW NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT.

4. ARIKPO BELIEVES NEW REGIME WILL EVENTUALLY GET AROUND TO TAKING AN INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE SAYS THEY ARE ALREADY SENSITIVE ON THIS SCORE BECAUSE GOWON

WAS SO GOOD IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA AND BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT HIS OVERTHROW HAS BEEN GENERALLY DISAPPROVED BY MOST AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THEY WILL NONETHELESS CONCENTRATE FOR THE TIME BEING ON INTERNAL MATTERS, AS INDDEED GOWON HAD LET THINGS SLIDE ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT AND THIS IS WHERE THEY CAN EXPECT TO MAKE AN IMPRESSIVE SHOW AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. NIGERIANS STILL IMMATURE AS A NATION, THEREFORE HAVE ACCEPTED NEW REGIME ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND UNCRITICALLY. NEW LEADERS EQUALLY YOUNG AND IMMATURE AND MAY TAKE RASH ACTIONS, BUT THEY APPEAR NONETHELESS CLEARYY COMMITETTED TO EFFICIENT AND CLEAN MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S AFFAIRS.

5. ARIKPO SAID HE HOPED TO RETIRE TO HIS HOMELAND IN CALABAR IN THE NEAR FURURE BUT FOR THE TIME BEING WAS LODGED GRATIS IN THE CHANCELLOR'S SUITE AT LAGOS UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE ONCE TAUGHT CHEMISTRY. HE DISPLAYED NEITHER REMORSE NOR BITTERNESS. HE SAID HE FOUND IT REFRESHING TO BE ABLE ONCE

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AGAIN AFTER MANY YEARS TO CALL ON FRIENDS WITHOUT CONCERN FOR PROTOCOL.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, EXPULSION, RELATIONS WITH REGIONAL ORGS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LAGOS08935
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750317-0323
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750954/aaaabvtx.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <13 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARIKPO ON MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XF, NI, IS, OAU, (AKIRPO, OKOI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006